

Friends *Forward*



SUMMER 2008

Refuges on TV



Find out all about it on page 6.

Puttin' on the Ritz for the Florida Panther

Volunteers interested in the Florida panther are showing up in unexpected places, including the Ritz Carlton Hotel in Naples and Whole Foods grocery stores in Naples and Palm Beach Garden. The hotel partnership began with an appeal for volunteers placed by Tom Murray, Friends executive director, at www.volunteermatch.org. The connection to Whole Foods was nurtured in part by a 10-year-old-girl.

All over the world, Ritz Carlton Hotels sponsor "Give Back Getaways" that offer guests a chance to donate time, money and energy to hunger and poverty relief, disadvantaged children or the environment. The Ritz Carlton Resort in Naples invited Friends of Florida Panther Refuge to create a working getaway. On the Ritz Carlton Web site, guests are invited to learn about the panther and the refuge while they "clear trails of non-native and invasive plants."

"We want unique programs that educate our customers and our employees," says Sue Stephenson, vice president of Ritz Carlton's Community Footprints program. "We want the guest to make an emotional connection."

Prompted by the opportunity to host groups of working visitors, Friends president Lisa Östberg and assistant refuge manager Takako Sato developed a five-session training program for volunteers to become Refuge Ambassadors. The first class of 15 graduated in June, including several Ritz staff members who are given time to participate.

In addition to bringing people to the refuge itself, Ritz Carlton Resort in Naples has built its own nature center in the hotel, with daily nature walks and summer camps for children. The "Nature's Wonders Sanctuary" includes refuge biologist Larry Richardson's panther photos. Friends membership information is distributed at the nature center.

From the Chief

'It Did this Soul Some Good'

"Sometimes, it can be easy to feel that the common citizen in our great nation is dispossessed..." wrote Glen Bryant, a member of the Friends of Noxubee Refuge. "Well, the *Friends for the Future Conference* that I attended last April provided a unique opportunity to be heard...It may sound overly sentimental, even corny, but seeing that many people come together in support of our nation's wildlife refuges



Geoff Haskett

did this soul some good."

Well, Glen, it did this soul a lot of good, too.

The Friends Conference filled the National Conservation Training Center with about 300 people pumped with enthusiasm, new ideas – and the determination to make the Refuge System stronger and larger. After the conference and without Refuge System involvement, the National Wildlife Refuge Association took Friends to Capitol Hill – leading a group armed

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5% Days at Whole Foods

Whole Foods grocery stores set aside three or four days a year to contribute five percent of that day's sales to a local nonprofit organization. Friends of Florida Panther Refuge earned \$1,366.87 on a 5% day in Naples. The Friends group has also had wine tasting events and "3.5% Days at Whole Foods." Friends members are present at every event.

On the other side of the state, 10-year-old Jordan was already an advocate for Florida panthers – even starting a club at her school. She and her mother learned about the Whole Foods event

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Standardized Designs for Refuge Visitor Centers

From visitor centers to kiosks, observation towers to photo and hunting blinds, the facilities that support visitor services on national wildlife refuges can be costly to build and often costly to maintain. In response to concerns about constantly rising costs for large construction projects, the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service developed national requirements and guidance to determine the appropriate size and cost for visitor centers and administrative facilities

The *Visitor Center/Administration Facility Selection and Cost Estimating Guide* is now the official Service policy. The guide is intended to support the Service's construction budget requests

and provide consistency to ensure that facilities are the appropriate size and can be built within budget constraints. Friends organizations may be involved in raising some of the funds for construction.

Refuges may select from a suite of standard floor plans developed to accommodate different levels of visitor and administrative activity – from small facilities that must combine administration and visitor services, to two-story and large stand-alone buildings.

The guide includes a comprehensive tool to enable refuges to determine the appropriate size. In addition, all projects

funded in 2007 and beyond must be LEED Certified (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design).

Size and layout of interior spaces may be modified to meet local needs as long as the total cost and size guidelines are met. The guide does, however, encourage refuges to build smaller visitor center buildings and interior displays so that more visitors are encouraged to go outdoors. Any funds saved by designing a smaller visitor center should be used to develop outdoor small-scale visitor and education facilities. 🌿

For more information on LEED certification, visit www.usgbc.org.

Building a Photo Blind

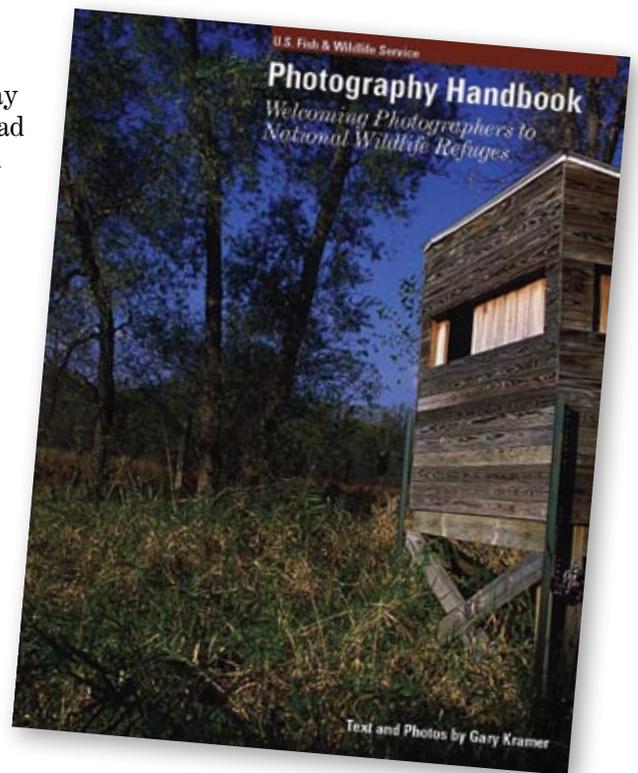
National wildlife refuges are among the nation's most spectacular places to photograph and appreciate wildlife. "In fact," says National Wildlife Refuge System Chief Geoff Haskett, "there may be no finer way to introduce youngsters to our nation's resources than to use photography as a route to better enjoyment of the outdoors."

So the Refuge System has published *Photography Handbook: Welcoming Photographers to National Wildlife Refuges*, filled with ideas for refuge staff on ways to create or enhance photography opportunities.

There are detailed recommendations for locating and building a photo blind, managing auto tour routes to enhance photographic opportunities, and preventing disturbance of photographers. The handbook notes that the building and maintaining of such "visitor enhancement facilities" as photo blinds is one of the recognized functions of volunteers and Friends groups.

Volunteer photographers may also do demonstrations or lead walks. At the National Bison Range, a local photographer leads a photo walk every International Migratory Bird Day. The Photo Group of the Friends of John Heinz National Wildlife Refuge at Tinicum in Pennsylvania includes about a dozen seasoned photographers who provide images and video for the refuge's interpretive displays, environmental education and public outreach.

A copy of *Photography Handbook: Welcoming Photographers to National Wildlife Refuges* has been sent to refuge managers at those refuges opened to visitors. 🌿



Far-Flung Volunteers

Imagine filling requests from 17 refuges for volunteers to work on 17 summer projects. While that might be a fairly typical summer for a Friends organization, the projects in this particular case were on nine refuges all over Alaska.

The Friends of Alaska National Wildlife Refuges began sending volunteers to support summer camps and other educational programs on Alaska's far-flung refuges in 2007. This summer, refuges expanded their requests and Friends coordinators Carla Stanley and Betty Siegel were very busy finding able bodies with skill and motivation – and then figuring out how to get them to remote refuges or campsites.

Siegel herself volunteered in June when Selawik National Wildlife Refuge partnered with the National Park Service to educate the local community about birding. Siegel traveled to the town of Kotzebue, where the refuge is located, and led 10 community

bird walks in a little more than a week. One walk was requested by a day care center serving 5-7 year old children who turned out to be quite interested in learning to say the often complicated names of the birds.

Stanley, a former science teacher, served as a volunteer counselor on a camping trip out of Kanuti National Wildlife Refuge for four native Alaskan teenagers and one teen from Virginia (whose grandmother runs a lodge in nearby Bettles). The result of a partnership between the refuge and the Tanana Chiefs Council, the camp offered lessons on such native traditions as storytelling and building a smoking station without nails or ropes. They smoked their own chum and king salmon to carry home and also learned stream ecology, completed a water volume study and tried their hand at scientific illustration and journal writing



Jason Sodergren

Children often participated in community birdwalks in Kotzebue, Alaska, led by Friends of Alaska Refuges Volunteers for Selawik National Wildlife Refuge.

(to say nothing of a week of wilderness camping above the Arctic Circle).

The Friends of Alaska Refuges matched a \$16,000 Challenge Cost Share Grant with their donated time to fund the 2008 projects. The grant covered transportation, some food and lodging, and educational supplies such as binoculars, journals, and field sampling equipment. 🌱

Becoming an Expert Volunteer in New Jersey

The staff at Edwin B. Forsythe National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey presented the Friends of Forsythe with a conundrum: a number of local groups had been asking for more interpretive activities (especially for day-trippers to Atlantic City), but there was neither staff nor resources to meet the requests. Al Martens, president of the Friends at the time, contacted The Richard Stockton College of New Jersey and a partnership was born.

Forsythe Refuge and Stockton College now offer training for Volunteer Master Naturalists (VMN) and Certified Interpretive Guides (CIG) as well as continuing education credits for teachers all in a single program. The first class of 21 graduated in May and included 10 refuge Friends and volunteers and four public school teachers. It is believed to be the first time a refuge has initiated

a Master Naturalist program before a state chapter has been established.

Barry Keefe, Forsythe Friends member, developed a Master Naturalist curriculum that includes a mix of scientific presentations and field experiences, as well as weekend field trips and a two-hour kayaking trip. Eight hours of the course are devoted to interpretive skills.

Graduates of the Naturalist/Guide program must complete 40 hours of approved environmental service plus eight hours of advanced training each year to maintain certification.

Funding for the program came from a Challenge Cost Share Grant, Stockton College and a grant from Barnegat Bay National Estuary Program, since half the refuge is on the shores of Barnegat

Bay. Other local, state and nonprofit organizations and agencies participated in program development. Delaware State Parks was instrumental in providing a Certified Interpretive Trainer.

The partnership with Stockton College is especially important. A college connection not only provides expertise but also a way for teacher participants to earn continuing education credits. Keefe says one of the first teacher participants has already started bringing her inner city students to refuge programs.

For more information:

Master Naturalists – Alliance of National Resource and Outreach Programs: www.nralliance.org

Certified Interpretive Guides – National Association of Interpretation: www.interpnet.com 🌱

From Friend to Friend

Gourmet Fundraising

How do you generate interest in birds that people rarely see and know little about? It was a perplexing question for the Friends of Maine Seabird Islands.

The Maine Coastal Islands National Wildlife Refuge is home to Atlantic puffins, common eiders, arctic and roseate terns, razorbills and cormorants. These birds nest on islands far offshore – sometimes 26 miles out to sea – where their nests are protected by rocks, heavy seas and fog. There are many year-round residents who have never seen many of these birds and remain unaware of the refuge and its resources.

So, Jane Hopwood, who chairs the Friends organization, recruited Bed and Breakfast Inns in Camden to participate in a unique fundraising event. Each B&B was paired with a specific island; refuge staff came with displays of those islands, the birds they host and various management activities. The B&Bs served wine and hors d'oeuvres and then

sent the guests on to Hopwood's home for dessert and coffee.

Over dessert, guests compared "their" islands and learned about both the refuge and the Friends group. The Friends raised \$1,500 through ticket sales and several guests joined the Friends.

Highlights and Tips

- Make the event social, fun and glamorous.
- Try to have the event involve several different "hooks." In this case, people who might not have been very interested in the refuge may have been intrigued to see the inside of these B&Bs – or attracted by the catered desserts!
- Involve other groups that benefit from ecotourism, such as the B&Bs. Those groups may be striving as hard as you are to promote their services.
- Invite friends and acquaintances who may not know anything about your refuge or Friends group, but know you well enough to want to find out what you are up to!



USFWS

The birds of Bear River National Wildlife Refuge in Utah will be the stars of a movie directed by Friends board member and former refuge manager Al Trout.

Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge: The Movie

Friends of the Bear River Refuge in Utah is sponsoring the production of an actual film – not a video – about the refuge; retired refuge manager Al Trout is the director. After Trout gave his farewell speech in May 2006, he was immediately elected a Friends board member and charged with oversight of the film project. Trout expects to have a professional 25-30 minute film to use at the Wildlife Education Center and distribute more widely as well, including sales through the Friends bookstore.

Jeff Hogan, an award-winning nature cinematographer with credits from the BBC and National Geographic, captured 18 hours of footage over a full year, capturing all four seasons and all the critical elements of the refuge: land, water, wildlife and people. Trout says Hogan has been able to "catch the charisma of the refuge...you can see the muscles of each bird when the tundra swans come flying in...this is a story that moves the heart and soul." Hogan and Trout made the first cut together and a composer has created an original score. As *Friends Forward* went to print, the movie makers have completed their 30-minute "rough cut" and are waiting to tap the perfect narrator.



USFWS

The Friends of Maine Seabird Islands generated money and interest by inviting guests to local Bed and Breakfast Inns, pairing each Inn with a specific island.

Highlights and Tips

- Choose your photographer carefully – someone with a track record in wildlife photography. “We empowered the right guy,” says Trout. “Jeff Hogan was a partner.”
- Speaking of partners, work with individuals and organizations who can extend your reach into film communities. In this case, partnership with the Utah Department of Tourism helped open doors to experts in all aspects of film production.
- Think big. Write an interesting script. Find the best people for each task.
- Without letting the project drag on indefinitely, have a flexible timeline.

Free Backpacks

On Earth Day 2008, people lined up more than an hour early at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida just to get a free backpack. The Ding Darling Wildlife Society paid for 100 backpacks and is providing 100 more for Refuge Week/Ding Darling Days.



Former acting refuge manager Jim Serfis and his daughter, sporting a “Let’s Go Outside” backpack at J.N. “Ding” Darling National Wildlife Refuge in Florida.

Each drawstring pack was filled with things for children to use on the refuge – children’s binoculars, a magnifying glass, sunglasses, “Let’s Go Outside” tattoos, an inflatable Earth, a carabiner with compass and flashlight, cards to identify butterflies and wild flowers. Refuge park ranger Toni Westland provided a crash course in how to use everything in the backpack and then families were on their own to explore.

This year’s Refuge Week Toolkit – being developed by the Refuge System Branch of Communications – has other backpack ideas, including those produced at Upper Mississippi National Fish and Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota. The “Ding” Darling “Let’s Go Outside” backpacks and their contents were produced by MediaSource in Fort Myers, Florida (239/ 931-3230). The Refuge Week Toolkit on CD will be mailed in early August to refuges that are open to visitors. The Toolkit will offer several media ideas, including sample letters to the editor that Refuge Friends might want to customize. 🌿

News Wanted!

We welcome stories about your refuge Friends group’s activities and accomplishments as well as articles about the contributions of individual Friends. In most cases, your contributions should be no longer than 300 words.

Please submit high resolution photos (300 dpi) to illustrate your story. Send materials to Martha_Nudel@fws.gov. 🌿

Kudos

The **Seney Natural History Association** was honored by the Midwest Region for 20 years of support for Seney National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan. Regional director Robyn Thorson noted that the Association was the first Refuge Friends Group in the Midwest.



John and Karen Hollingsworth/USFWS

Seney Natural History Association has received the Silver Eagle Award for its 20 years of support for Seney National Wildlife Refuge in Michigan.

Denis Mudderman received a Midwest Regional Director’s Award for contributing 1,300 hours as a Friends board member and refuge volunteer at Tamarac National Wildlife Refuge in Minnesota.

Marie Springer, founder and president of the Friends of Walkill River National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey, was honored with an individual 2008 Environmental Quality Award from the Environmental Protection Agency. EPA says Springer “has been a stalwart in efforts to preserve open space and encourage a balanced and eco-friendly use of natural resources.”

Nancy Menasco, president of the Red River Refuge Alliance, received the Southeast Regional Director’s Honor Award for volunteer service. Menasco helped secure funds to renovate a building that served as a temporary headquarters for the refuge. 🌿

Puttin' on the Ritz

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in Naples and soon, the Palm Beach Garden store held its own 5% day to benefit the refuge.

For more information on Whole Foods 5% Days, visit a store in your area or go to www.wholefoods.com. For

more information on Ritz Carlton Give Back Getaways, go to <http://corporate.ritzcarlton.com/en/About/GiveBackGetaways.htm> or contact the director of public relations at the hotel closest to your refuge. 🌱



Stacy Reich

Friends of Florida Panther Refuge Lisa Ostberg with Jordan, a young panther supporter, during a 5% day at Whole Foods in Palm Beach Garden.

Calendar of Friends and National Events

August 15: Applications due for National Trails Fund grants from the American Hiking Society. For more information go to <http://www.americanhiking.org/NTFApp.aspx> or call the AHS at 1-800-972-8608, or contact FWS Trails Coordinator Nathan Caldwell at Nathan_caldwell@fws.gov or 703-358-2205.

September 4: National Wildlife Refuge Friends Grant Program applications due. To apply for a grant, go to: http://www.nfwf.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Browse_All_Programs&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=9473. For more information, contact

Trevor Needham: Trevor_Needham@fws.gov, 703-358-2392; or Ellen Gabel: Ellen.Gabel@nfwf.org, 202-857-0166.

September 27–28: “Sales Outlets: Beyond Bookstores” training course, Newport, Rhode Island. For more information, contact Laura Jones at Laura_Jones@fws.gov or 304-876-7499 or Trevor Needham at Trevor_Needham@fws.gov or 703-358-2392.

September 27: National Public Lands Day

October 12–18: National Wildlife Refuge Week 🌱

Refuges on TV

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The Refuge System has unveiled a new public service announcement (PSA) and print ad. The PSA, in English and Spanish, aired more than 19,825 times in at least 80 markets by mid-June. If the Refuge System had paid for the TV time, it would have cost about \$10.9 million. The PSA has returned about 85 times the cost of production.

Additionally, the Refuge System has 33 signs in free ad space at six airports – LaGuardia in New York; San Antonio International in Texas; Newark Liberty International in New Jersey; Philadelphia International; Atlanta Hartsfield International; and Manchester Boston Regional airports. Combining the cost of TV and airport space, the campaign so far has returned about \$11.2 million on the investment in production. The Refuge System will be soliciting yet more airports in the next few weeks when we expect more space to become available.

The PSA (on a DVD and as a Beta version) has been sent to refuge managers for local distribution on TV, perhaps on monitors in local hotels, or even doctor and dental offices – anywhere that video is shown. The PSA may be viewed online at <http://www.fws.gov/friends/newswire/>. 🌱

From Anger to Action

Upper Mississippi River National Wildlife and Fish Refuge held 46 public meetings attended by 4,500 people during the preparation of its Comprehensive Conservation Plan (CCP), which was finally approved in 2006. Some of those people lived in Lansing, Iowa – hunters, anglers, swimmers and campers intimately connected to the river – and they were angry about almost everything in the original CCP.

Retired Lansing science teacher John Verdon gave the refuge a “D–” on its Lansing presentation and asked for another meeting. There were many more meetings, often including refuge manager Don Hultman, and to the surprise of nearly everyone involved, Verdon was ultimately able to write a letter to the editor of the *LaCrosse Tribune* (Wisconsin) saying that, “We resolved our differences through compromise and cooperation and came to mutual agreement on every issue.”

One key issue was the condition of sand beaches along the Mississippi. With the support of the Service, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Iowa and Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources, 14 beaches have been restored and 27 beach pockets were created for camping. “We have developed a level of trust, respect and friendship unparalleled



John Verdon

Friends of Pool 9 (Upper Mississippi Refuge) pull an antique auto chassis out of the Mississippi River near Lansing Iowa during a 2008 river cleanup.

between Agency personnel and Lansing area citizens. Negative feelings were transformed into positive actions,” wrote Verdon to the newspaper.

It was Tim Loose, operations specialist at the McGregor District Office, who first suggested creation of a Friends organization. The Friends of Pool 9, Upper Mississippi Refuge, was incorporated as a nonprofit organization

in 2006 and now has more than 400 members. The group has held several pool-wide clean up days, joined refuge staff in wildlife monitoring surveys and planned a family day to put students and their parents on the river and build membership.

Spark Ignited Enthusiasm

The sole purpose of the Friends of Pool 9, at least initially, was to take care of the resources in Pool 9, one of 26 pools between the locks and dams that channel the mighty waters of the Mississippi.

Now, however, the Friends of Pool 9 is joining with six other Friends organizations to become FUMR – Friends of the Upper Mississippi Refuge. Each group will maintain its own local interests while working for the good of the entire river, its habitats and its wildlife.

“From that little disagreement that we had in the Lansing High School gym,” reflects Verdon, “out of that came this. It was the spark that ignited the enthusiasm.”

Bookstore Training Course in Fall

Interested in learning key aspects of starting a new sales outlet or improving an existing store? Consider signing up for the *Sales Outlets: Beyond Bookstores* course, September 27-28 in Newport, Rhode Island. This dynamic course – offered annually – provides hands-on training in marketing, displays, selecting and purchasing the right merchandise, and aspects of sales management.

The course is designed for Friends members, volunteers and U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service employees who are responsible for operating a sales outlet or bookstore. Scholarship funding is available for Friends members.

For more information about registration and scholarships, contact Laura Jones at Laura_Jones@fws.gov or 304-876-7499 or Trevor Needham at Trevor_Needham@fws.gov or 703-358-2392. 🌱

From the Chief

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with facts and budgetary figures and energized by three days of great interactions with people from across the country.

In almost any season of the year, the Refuge System's training and conferences are unparalleled for encouraging the exchange of information, essential for the dynamic growth of a citizens' movement. The upcoming Friends Academy in August – which we had to limit to 25 leaders – will be one chance among several for Friends to become better informed about the most pressing resource challenges we face.

I hope you will consider taking the “Sales Outlets: Beyond Bookstores” course in Rhode Island September 27-28 or “Developing and Working with Friends Organizations” in May 2009. We've already scheduled our “Volunteer Recruitment and Management” course at NCTC August 5-8, 2009. Scholarships are available to take courses that refresh your thinking and your inspiration.

I travel a lot. I meet loads of Friends, and that's one of the best parts of this job. Every place I go, I see the work of our Friends – in visitor centers, in programs with kids, in habitat restoration. And everywhere I go, I see how the Refuge System's training and courses are making a difference. 🌱

Friends *Forward*

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March Workday Brings Recognition

Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey has its first-ever brochure and a very active Friends group – but no staff. Due to budget cuts, Supawna Meadows lost its entire staff in 2007. Three refuge Friends groups in New Jersey and one from Pennsylvania organized a work day in March to spruce up the refuge for spring and publicize its dearth of funding.

The event drew not only 60 volunteers, but also members of Congress, local elected officials, Northeast regional refuge chief Tony Léger and representatives of The Conservation Fund, the National Wildlife Refuge Association and several state and local environmental organizations.

Cape May deputy refuge manager Virginia Rettig said the volunteers cleaned Grassland Trail, improved the accessible parking pad and installed six interpretive signs along with more than 250 feet of split rail fence to demarcate the parking area.

Cogentrix, the major corporate sponsor of the Supawna Meadows Friends organization, also attended. The company has contributed more than \$12,000 over the past four years to refuge maintenance.

New Jersey Congressman Scott Garrett told the March gathering that, “As you can see, the degradation of one refuge negatively affects the entire system. We must remember that each refuge matters.”

Since the work day, the Friends have added several new members and the Salem County Nature Club has led two bird walks. Newly elected Friends president Judy Oshipp added, “The work day did more than physically enhance the refuge. It renewed the dedication of the Friends to fight for the refuge's success as a tourist destination of the South Jersey area.” 🌱



Tony Léger

Four refuge Friends groups organized a work day at Supawna Meadows National Wildlife Refuge in New Jersey.